



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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## Training and Development: Current Classes Available

The Training and Development summer class schedule is online!

For a current list of classes open to all UGA faculty and staff and to register, please visit UGA Training and Development at

[www.hr.uga.edu/careerdev/career.html](http://www.hr.uga.edu/careerdev/career.html)

Trainings are also available exclusively for CAES faculty and staff. A full description of classes may be found at [www.caes.uga.edu/unit/hr/employment/documents/CAESClasses.pdf](http://www.caes.uga.edu/unit/hr/employment/documents/CAESClasses.pdf)

Please contact Debbie Gausvik, at [dgausvik@uga.edu](mailto:dgausvik@uga.edu) or (706) 542-8575 to schedule a class in your department.

# For Your Benefit...

Volume 2, Summer 2009

## Five Ways to Stay Positive in Negativity

It's easy to be positive in a positive environment. It's when things are emotionally draining and negative that you're challenged to behave differently. But you have the opportunity to be the beacon of light for others around you. By your actions and responses, you can demonstrate and teach others how to behave in an appropriate, positive and professional manner. Positive energy catches on just as quickly as negative energy. Sometimes people are simply stuck in a habit or pattern of behavior and are accustomed to acting a certain way. If the environment is really caustic, then it's what people are used to and may be all they know. It takes some time and effort as well as a commitment to do something differently to create sustainable change. You must be willing to identify and stop tolerating what's not working, do the right thing even if it's initially unpopular and then teach others to do the same. Here are five ways you can be a positive force in your workplace:



**The First Step Is Awareness:** Recognize the negativity around you. Sometimes you can even feel your energy being drained by the words being spoken. If it feels bad or uncomfortable, then it's negative. These feelings are a form of intelligence similar to a tap on the shoulder letting you know something is not right. If you can identify what is happening, you can make good choices about handling it.

**It All Starts with You:** In what ways are you contributing to the negativity around you? Are you listening to gossip or participating in conversations where the only focus is to denigrate, diminish or criticize? Language matters. Everything you say has an impact; saying something negative not only dishonors the person you're speaking about and the person you're speaking with, but it also makes you feel bad even if you don't realize it. Learn to

respect people's humanity and their right to be themselves. Complaining without end does not focus on creating solutions; rather, it perpetuates and magnifies the problem, wasting everyone's precious time and energy.

**Speak Up:** Tell the other person how you feel by saying, "This doesn't work for me." It's nonjudgmental, since you're making it about you, not them. Also, people often don't realize they are being negative. Point it out in a gentle, caring way: "Do you realize you are complaining?" Just bringing it to their attention can be enough to shift the conversation. Over time, people will learn what they can and cannot discuss with you, and it will stop being an issue. If you say nothing, your silence conveys permission to continue.

**Be Constructive, Positive, Meaningful and Beneficial:** What is the point or purpose of what you're saying? Is it to hurt or help? And at the end of the conversation, is there an action step to take? Constructive conversations are empowering and leave people a little better off from having participated in them. Become the kind of person who takes your time and words seriously.

**Praise and Acknowledge:** It's amazing what a few words of praise and acknowledgement can do. You want to be the kind of person people gravitate to because they know they will be uplifted by you, not put down or drained of life-sustaining energy. In short, you want people to feel good after being in your presence. No matter what is going on around you, you control your inner environment and how you choose to respond to external events and situations. It's your responsibility to become the kind of person you enjoy being and with whom others enjoy being around. It takes a true leader to walk a path different from the crowd. So when others are negative, stretch your boldness muscles and be positive in spite of what others do or think. It's the only way to create a ripple of change. And if we all do our part, then slowly but surely, we will make a difference in our work environment and the larger community. By Julie Fuimano

## Equal Opportunity in CAES

Each of us as a CAES employee has a professional and legal responsibility to practice equal opportunity. To find out how this applies specifically to you in your daily work, contact Steven Gibson at [sgibson@uga.edu](mailto:sgibson@uga.edu) or (706) 542-1147, or visit: <http://www.caes.uga.edu/unit/hr/employment/CAESEqualOpportunityUGA.htm>

## Inside Washington: Taxpayers To Get Rude Surprise

Millions of Americans enjoying their small windfall from President Barack Obama's "Making Work Pay" tax credit are in for an unpleasant surprise next spring.

The government is going to want some of that money back.

The tax credit is supposed to provide up to \$400 to individuals and \$800 to married couples as part of the massive economic recovery package enacted in February.

But new tax withholding tables issued by the IRS could cause millions of taxpayers to get hundreds of dollars more than they are entitled to under the credit, money that will have to be repaid at tax time.

At-risk taxpayers include a broad swath of the public: married couples in which both spouses work; workers with more than one job; retirees who have federal income taxes withheld from their pension payments and Social Security recipients with jobs that provide taxable income.

For many, the new tax tables will simply mean smaller-than-expected tax refunds next year, IRS spokesman Terry Lemons said. The average refund was nearly \$2,700 this year.

But taxpayers who calculate their withholding so they get only small refunds could face an unwelcome tax bill next April, said Jackie Perlman, an analyst with the Tax Institute at H&R Block. "They are going to get a surprise," she said.

Perlman's advice: check your federal withholding to make sure sufficient taxes are being taken out of your pay. If you are married and both spouses work, you might consider having taxes withheld at the higher rate for single filers. If you have

multiple jobs, you might consider having extra taxes withheld by one of your employers. You can make that request with a Form W-4.

The IRS has a calculator on its Web site, found [here](#), to help taxpayers figure withholding. So do many private tax preparers.

The credit pays workers 6.2 percent of their earned income, up to a maximum of \$400 for individuals and \$800 for married couples who file jointly. Individuals making more \$95,000 and couples making more than \$190,000 are ineligible.

The tax credit was designed to help boost the economy by getting more money to consumers in their regular paychecks. Employers were required to start using the new withholding tables by April 1.

The tables, however, don't take into account several common categories of taxpayers, experts said.

For example:

--A single worker with two jobs making \$20,000 a year at each job will get a \$400 boost in take-home pay at each of them, for a total of \$800. That worker, however, is eligible for a maximum credit of \$400, so the remaining \$400 will have to be paid back at tax time -- either through a smaller refund or a payment to the IRS.

The IRS recognized there could be a similar problem for married couples if both spouses work, so it adjusted the withholding tables. The fix, however, was imperfect.

-- A married couple with a combined income of \$50,000 is eligible for an \$800 credit. However, if both spouses work and make more than \$13,000, the new withholding tables give them each a \$600 boost -- for a total of \$1,200.



There were 33 million married couples in 2008 in which both spouses worked. That's 55 percent of all married couples, according to the Census Bureau.

-- A single college student with a part-time job making \$10,000 would get a \$400 boost in pay. However, if that student is claimed as a dependent on a parent's tax return, she doesn't qualify for the credit and would have to repay it when she files next year.

Some retirees face even bigger headaches.

The Social Security Administration [sent] out \$250 payments to more than 50 million retirees in May as part of the economic stimulus package. The payments [went] to people who receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, railroad retirement benefits or veteran's disability benefits.

The payments are meant to provide a boost for people who don't qualify for the tax credit. However, they will go to retirees even if they have earned income and receive the credit. Those retirees will have the \$250 payment deducted from their tax credit -- but not until they file their tax returns next year, long after the money may have been spent.

Retirees who have federal income taxes withheld from pension benefits also are getting an income boost as a result of the new withholding tables. However, pension benefits are not earned income, so they don't qualify for the tax credit. That money will have to be paid back next year when tax returns are filed.

By Stephen Ohlemacher, Associated Press Writer

Family & Medical Leave Act

**FMLA @ UGA**

UGA uses a "rolling" 12-month period to determine eligibility for leave time under FMLA. A new rolling year calculation tool is available for this purpose.

The FMLA policy, FMLA calculator and FMLA forms may be found at <http://www.hr.uga.edu/fmla/guidelines.html>

## Did You Know...

Employees enrolled in a UGA Health Insurance plan may view their medical information online?

UGA employees enrolled in a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia health plan (Indemnity, PPO, BlueChoice HMO, or

HSA PPO) may register at <http://www.bcbgsa.com/> for secure access to all of their benefit information and recent medical claims.

Employees enrolled in the Kaiser Permanente HMO also may gain access to their medical

benefits information at <https://members.kaiserpermanente.org/kpweb/signonpage.do>.

Registered users may also request new ID cards, change primary care physician (for HMO participants), and download health claim forms.